Chapter 4
Media Facilitation

"It is likely that small pools of news media will be assigned directly to operational units to cover all facets of activity. With few exceptions, there will be no security review of media copy or audiovisual products. The policy will be to maintain security at the source. It is important to support the efforts of the media and our dealings with them should not be confrontational, but professional and courteous."

- GEN Binford Peay
Commander, U.S. Central Command [1994]
FM 3-61 (46-1), Public Affairs Operations

PRINCIPLES OF INFORMATION

4-1. In the past 20 years the Army has undergone a fundamental shift in our approach to dealing with the news media. In response to the perceived treatment by the press during the Vietnam War, we have gone from adopting an exclusionary tactic for the conduct of the invasion of Grenada in 1983, to managing the controversial pool system for covering the initial stages of the Gulf War in 1991, and more recently evolving into an almost completely open access policy in Somalia (1993), Haiti (1994) and Bosnia (1995) operations.

4-2. The results of this policy evolution are the "DoD Principles of Information," which form the foundation for the PA function of media facilitation. The basic approach that DoD and the Army take to media facilitation is contained in Appendix A, The DoD Principles of Information and Appendix B, The Guidelines for Coverage of DoD Combat Operations.

4-3. Simply stated, media facilitation is providing assistance to civilian and military news media representatives covering an operation. The objective of media facilitation is to support news media efforts. This includes providing accurate, timely, balanced, credible coverage of the force and the operation, while minimizing the possibility that media activities will disrupt the operation.

4-4. Media facilitation includes assisting media entry into the area of operations, registering media representatives, orienting them on the ground rules for coverage and ensuring that they understand the security policies and constraints under which they must agree to operate if they desire Army support.

4-5. Media facilitation also involves arranging interviews and briefings, coordinating unit visits and escorts, and assisting media representatives with transportation, messing, billeting, communication support, safety and equipment. Media facilitation involves the early establishment of a media center as a focal point for media wishing to cover an operation, for Army personnel seeking assistance with media representatives in their area, and for resolution of problems or incidents resulting from media-military interaction.

4-6. A primary strategic goal of any Public Affairs staff is to support an operational commander in achieving a constant flow of complete, accurate and timely information about the mission and U.S. forces.

4-7. The PA staff accomplishes this goal by making information fully and readily available within the constraints of national security and OPSEC, and by facilitating inclusion of civilian and military news media representatives in military units whenever possible.

PA STAFF AND MEDIA CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

4-8. **PA Staff Sections**.   The prime focus of the PA staff is staff coordination. The staff will be the element tasked with executing the media facilitation strategy.

4-9. The staff provides PA planning and operational guidance to the PAO. They ensure leaders within the command understand the commander's media relations policies, and serves as the command ombudsman in the settlement of conflicts between the media and the military.

4-10. As an active participant in the command's information planning element, the staff coordinates with G2, G3, G5, PSYOP, U.S. Information Service, and other staff elements in developing the commander's information strategy to ensure synergy and to reduce the probability of conflicting messages.

4-11. **Media Operations Centers**.   Currently, joint, combined and Army media centers fulfill the requirement for a focal point for the news media during military operations. In essence, the media operations center (MOC) is a command post for media support efforts. It serves as both the primary information source, and as a logistical support and coordination base for commercial news organizations covering the operation.

4-12. Media centers are organized when large numbers of news media representatives are anticipated to cover military activities. Media centers may be formed for all types of operations or for any stage within an operation.

4-13. When operated by unified/specified commands, these media centers may be called a Joint Information Bureau (JIB).   At the combined commands, they are called an Allied Press Information Center (APIC), Coalition Press Information Centre or Combined Information Bureau (CIB). At theater level and below, they are simply referred to as Media Operations Centers.

4-14. MOCs support the commander and are subordinate to the command's PAO. They provide the commander a professional, immediately available, fully trained organization designed to respond to

national and international civilian media interest in American military operations.

4-15. In addition, the media operations center provides the following functions:

- A single point of contact and information source for media within the theater
- Briefings and enforcement of media guidelines and ground rules
- Primary information release authority for the senior PAO
- Coordination of news media coverage with corps, divisions, brigades, etc.
- Coordination with all service branches for each service, agency or country
- Identification and communication of host-nation sensitivities to all personnel in theater
- Preparation for and conducting press briefings and news conferences
- Registration of news media personnel
- Media Operations Center Staffing and Organization

4-16. Organization and personnel staffing of media operations centers are determined by the responsible command in coordination with the PAO and his staff. APIC staffs should be a proportionate representation of the forces, with representation from all services involved in the operation. This will be determined by CPA at the unified command. Regardless of the echelon establishing a media operations center, the organizational model is functionally designed and remains relatively the same.

4-17. MOCs normally consist of two major elements: a Headquarters Group and a Media Operations Center Group.

4-18. The headquarters is made up of the command group and support staff. The command group contains the commander, deputy commander and/or executive officer, and the sergeant major. The support staff is normally task organized to support tailored forward deployed MOC teams or sub-MOCs when the APIC operates as other than a single element. The support sections provide administrative support, conduct lease and purchase contracting, setup, operate and maintain the unit's equipment, and conduct the day-to-day operation of the MOC. The support sections are responsible for the execution of MOC communications, supply operations, administration support, vehicle maintenance, security and other support functions as required.

4-19. The Media Operations Center consists of a Plans Section, a Media Support Section and an Information Operations Section.

4-20. The plans section is responsible for all MOC media planning. It establishes MOC requirements and determines operating procedures and policies. It maintains channels of communication with OASD(PA) and the JPAO (or senior command PAO). It is responsible for recommending and assisting in the development and dissemination of PA Guidance. It monitors available major U.S., international and local television and radio broadcasts and print publications providing coverage of the

operations, conducts news media analysis and evaluates the effectiveness of MOC operations.

4-21. The Media Support Section (MSS) is the primary point of contact for news media representatives (NMRs) in an area of operation seeking information or assistance in covering the force and the operation. The MSS receives and registers NMRs, briefs NMRs on the media ground rules and security procedures or concerns, and orients them on the force, the operation and other pertinent issues (special safety or host nation considerations).

4-22. The MSS orchestrates the command's news briefings and coordinate for subject matter experts to explain and discuss operations and capabilities. The MSS is also responsible for coordinating for appropriate, knowledgeable escorts, unit visits, and service member interviews. It assists the Joint Force or other senior PAO in preparing service members for interaction with the news media. Finally, it provides support to Joint Force elements and service component PA elements seeking assistance with NMRs.

4-23. The Information Operations Section is responsible for monitoring plans and operations from within the command's operation center and assessing the PA implications of events occurring throughout the area. It ensures that the MOC has current situation information, is aware of issues of potential media interest, and can obtain any operational information necessary for the development of responses to media inquiries in a timely manner.

4-24. The IO section ensures that PA operations are synchronized with other combat functions and promote early coordination of PA, CA and PSYOP functions.

4-25. **MOC Staffing**. Currently, media operations center staffing requires augmentation, either by PA-trained individual fillers or by Army PA units. As fully independent units, the Public Affairs Operations Center (PAOC) (SRC 45423A000) and Mobile PA Detachment (MPAD) (SRC 45413A000) are currently organized, trained, and prepared to fill this role.

4-26. In fact, these Army PA detachments are specifically designed to function as an Army media operation center in theater, corps, or division-controlled operations. MPADs can be combined to form media sub-centers in forward battle areas.

4-27. PA personnel from non-deployed commands and installation PA sections may be called upon to augment news media centers however, requests for individual augmentation should be coordinated through operational channels. Reserve and Guard unit personnel can be used to augment on a voluntary basis.

4-28. An example of a media operations center is included at Appendix L.

MOC OPERATIONS

4-29. In major operations -- actions conducted by unified commands -- a Joint Information Bureau will usually be the first to deploy for this purpose. A JIB will be staffed by public affairs personnel from the services represented in the joint force; participating services may

establish their own media centers subordinate to the JIB to disseminate information about their particular missions.

4-30. As the operation unfolds, the Army plans for and contributes to a replacement PA organization for the JIB which consists of individual PA personnel from each of the services and Army PA detachments.

4-31. Media Center operations will be based on five primary assumptions:

- Accurate information is available in a timely manner and adheres to the DoD Principles of Information in Appendix A.
- Current trends in communications technologies within the information environment will continue to reduce the news media's reliance on military support and assistance when covering operations and will continue to increase the availability of information to a worldwide audience.
- Media representatives will be in an area of operations at the start of, and in most cases, before an operation begins.
- Media interest and coverage in non combat operations may be higher at the outset, and barring a significant event which renews national or international attention or interest, will taper off over time. During a high-intensity conflict, media interest could remain high.
- Military PA elements require access to complete information, state-of-the-art communication equipment, and must possess sophisticated coordination channels in order to pre-empt speculative, inaccurate or biased reporting.

4-32. Media centers will support and be responsible to the senior commander of the operation on a 24-hour basis. Media centers are usually established by unified command CINCs to support the news media in an area of operation.

4-33. During the first 24 hours after arrival in a new theater of operation, a media center can provide limited media support services.

4-34. Within this first operational day, the MOC must:

- Establish a "hasty media center" as the initial focal point for the news media until additional media support forces arrive.
- Establish communication with OASD (PA), each service's PA chain of command, and with units operating within the theater.
- Request operational information release authority within the theater.
- Establish command structure/lines of authority.
- Coordinate with appropriate authority for leasing and purchasing contracts.
- Begin to register news media personnel in the area
- Provide basic media support (coordination of media access to subordinate units and media escort as resources permit).
- Assist or conduct command news briefings and conferences.
- Coordinate Subject Matter Expert (SME) interviews.
- Be capable of assisting in the transmission of media products.

4-35. Media Support -- Initially, the media operations center will need to provide varying degrees of support to news media personnel including specialized equipment (flak vest, NBC gear, helmets), transmission of media products, etc.

4-36. This support may include but not be limited to:

- Coordinate media contact with units or individuals to include SME interviews
- Provide a single point of contact for information on operational issues
- Provide news releases, fact sheets, copies of transcripts for news briefings/conferences and copies of archival file products
- When other means are not available, the media center may provide coordination for transportation (to and from interview sources), transmission of media products and food and billeting
- Provide limited media escort within the area
- (SOPs for MOCs should be pre-established for each theater of operation and used for media operations within that theater.)

REGISTRATION OF MEDIA

4-37. Principle to supporting the commander's information strategy is the inclusion of news media representatives (NMR) within Army units from the earliest pre-deployment stages of all operations. The personal safety of media representatives, as acknowledged by the media themselves, is not a reason for excluding them from operations.

4-38. However, all media requesting support or access to units to cover Army operations must be registered. This includes freelance journalist, military media representatives, such as those who are assigned to Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, Stars & Stripes newspaper and other Armed Forces Information Service (AFIS) personnel who are not supporting units on the battlefield.

4-39. **Registration versus Accreditation**. Accreditation is the verification and validation that a person represents a legitimate commercial news organization. This means that accrediting governments or military organizations will physically verify the affiliation of an applicant with a specific news organization.

4-40. This is difficult to perform amidst an ongoing operation, especially when deployed far away from CONUS. It is generally accepted that, when overseas, the decision to accredit news media is made by the host nation's government in coordination with the combined or unified commander.

4-41. When accreditation isn't required by the host nation, responsibility for this determination is held by the combined or unified commander. Accreditation is normally performed at Corps level or higher.

4-42. Accreditation is a major problem for many commands because they are forced to determine the legitimacy of smaller, lessor-known news organizations and freelance journalists without news organization affiliation.

4-43. Unless it is absolutely required by host nations, the American military will attempt to avoid accreditation.

4-44. Registration, however, is merely an accounting tool, which provides PAOs the ability to know what media are represented in the theater, where they are located, and their movement around the theater. This information is helpful in planning and conducting media logistical support and transportation, and in preparing subordinate commands for media encounters. It is also helpful to commanders who might want to provide newsworthy events to the media.

4-45. Registration also identifies which news media have asked for military assistance and access, and have agreed to the command's media ground rules.

4-46. **Registration Requirements**. The registration process is conducted in five basic steps:

- Verify the identity of the media representative (including checking for valid passport/visa, professional media organization membership card, media ID card, other military press credentials, etc.).

- Have them sign an agreement to abide by the established media ground rules for the operation in exchange for granting support, access to units, information and other privileges. If required, revoke credentials for those who violate the ground rules. (Enforcement of this requirement is essential.)

- Have NMR agree to and sign a liability waiver that frees the military of responsibility if the NMR is killed or injured as a result of covering the operation. (An example of a waiver of liability is at Annex I).

- Give NMRs proof of registration (memorandum, press badge or other identification).

- Maintain a roster of registered NMRs and monitor their movements during the time they are receiving military support.

4-47. NMRs who refuse to agree to the military ground rules and who are not registered will receive only the support and information assistance as provided to the general public.

4-48. NMRs should be informed that registration and acceptance of media ground rules will entitle them to better access to units and subject matter experts, and provision of military ground and air transportation when possible.

MEDIA GROUND RULES

4-49. Media ground rules will assist inprotecting the security and the safety of the troops involved while allowing you the greatest permissible freedom and access in covering the story. All interviews with news media representatives will be on the record.

4-50. Security at the source will be the policy. (An example of media ground rules is in Appendix X.)

4-51. The following categories of information are releasable:

- Arrival of major U.S. units when officially announced by a U.S. spokesperson. Mode of travel (sea or air) and date of departure from home station

- Approximate friendly force strength figures, after review by host nation government
- Approximate enemy casualty and POW figures for each action operation
- Non-sensitive, unclassified information regarding U.S. air, ground and sea operations (past and present).
- Friendly force size in an action or operation will be announced using general terms such as multi-battalion or naval task force
- Specific force/unit identification/designation may be released when it has become public knowledge and no longer warrants security protection
- Identification and location of military targets and objectives previously under attack
- Generic origin of air operations such as land or carrier based.
- Date/time/location of previous conventional military missions and actions as well as mission results
- Types of ordnance expended will be released in general terms rather than specific amounts
- Weather and climate conditions
- Allied participation by type of operation (ships, aircraft, ground units, etc)

4-52. Information Not Releasable

- Information about future military plans, activities or operations
- Vulnerabilities or weaknesses on command, control, personnel or the operation
- Friendly unit and command strengths, on-hand equipment or supplies; the presence, activities and methods of operation of specifically designated units or equipment
- Information on friendly force security and deception measures and countermeasures, and intelligence collection activities
- Specific information on friendly force current operations and movements, deployments and dispositions
- Information on in-progress operations against hostile targets
- Information on nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, equipment or training

MEDIA POOLS

4-53. Journalists, as a group, are strongly opposed to media pools in any form. The media pool is seen as a restriction placed on the media representatives and their ability to provide coverage of the news. They are grudgingly tolerated, and should be only used as a last resort when space onboard military transportation is limited, access to an area must be controlled, and after all other possibilities have been explored and eliminated. Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events. Both the Army and the news media are in agreement, however, that limited access is better than no access at all.

4-54. When a pool system is required, the military PAO will identify the maximum size of the pool that can be supported. The news media

representatives on the scene will select media pool members. A roster of media personnel registered with the Army PAO will be used to identify the media representatives eligible to participate. The pool should consist of, but not be limited to, a minimum of one video crew (camera operator, sound technician and reporter), one still photographer (wire service, newspaper, or magazine), one radio reporter, and one newspaper or wire service reporter. Special consideration must be given to international reporters as well. While this is a fair and representative pool structure, it is the media themselves who must determine the make-up of the pool. Some news events and situations may lend themselves more to print, or conversely television reporting, and the media representatives may choose to select an unbalanced pool.

4-55. All pool members must be willing and able to meet deadlines and supply information products (video, audio, still media, and text) in a timely manner to all media representatives who are entitled to material generated by the pool. The military media center will also have access to this information and will make it available to all other requesting news media organizations.

4-56. Consistent with its capabilities, the military will supply PAOs with facilities to enable timely, secure, compatible transmission of pool material and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable, journalists will, as always, file by any other means available. The military will not ban communications systems operated by news organizations, but electromagnetic operational security in battlefield situations may require restrictions on the use of such systems.

4-57. Once a media pool has been selected, the media pool will select a team leader. It is the responsibility of this team leader to ensure that members of the media pool meet their obligation to share information. The Army PAO will not involve himself in settling internal disputes of the media pool.

4-58. Finally, the pool is an option of last resort. It should be disbanded as soon as free and open access to the operational area can be allowed, normally within the first 24 hours of an operation.

THE DOD NATIONAL MEDIA POOL

4-59. The DoD National Media Pool was established to prevent recurrence of problems encountered with media coverage during Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada in 1983. During the first 24 hours of Urgent Fury, more than 600 reporters attempted to gain access to the operation. The large numbers overwhelmed the limited Public Affairs elements available to assist them.

4-60. In 1985, the Secretary of Defense established the DoD National Media Pool, a civilian news element of approximately 16 media representatives from various national news organizations, with the mission of covering an operation from its initial stages until open coverage could be allowed.

4-61. The pool members remain on call in Washington, D.C., and are available for immediate worldwide deployment. Their products are shared by the open news media until the pool is disbanded and access is granted to the entire news community.

4-62. Supported commanders are responsible for providing operational support to the DoD National Media Pool. At a minimum, the pool members will require:

- Daily, comprehensive and unclassified operational news briefings.

- Access to ongoing combat operations. The media are aware of the personal risks involved in covering combat operations. They will not be denied access to them based on risk to their personal safety.

- Reasonable access to key personnel. All information gathered from these personnel is unclassified and on the record.

- An escort -- usually a lieutenant colonel or colonel -- to coordinate pool support and access requirements.

- Transportation and itinerary planning and coordination that will allow media to gain access to the theater of operations and to disperse pool members throughout the operational area.

- In today's global information environment, when news media can report live from almost anywhere in the world in almost any environment, the technological capabilities of most news organizations decreases the importance of the DoD National Media Pool once word of an operation has spread.

- When the DoD media pool is operational, PAOs will attempt to provide the same information support concerning theater operations to all other media in the operational area.

- However, their primary responsibility is to the DoD Media Pool. After the DoD media pool is dissolved, all media in theater will be dealt with in an equitable manner with respect to information and support provided.

- As soon as open access to the operational area can be allowed (normally within the first 24 hours of an operation), the DoD National Media should be disbanded.

NEWS BRIEFINGS

4-63. There are several reasons for holding news briefings, in addition to the daily operational news briefing required at the unified command level.

- Credibility: The physical presence of a briefer and his willingness to meet the issue head on leads to a much more credible presentation

- Uniformity: All media get the same information at the same time.

- Expression of concern: A briefer represents the face of the command, which shows more concern than an impersonal news release, especially in situations where there is loss of life or extensive damage.

- Complexity of material: Where material is technical or complicated, the news briefing makes the subject matter more easily understandable. The question and answer session that accompanies a news briefing saves time in call-backs by news reporters needing clarification.

4-64. News briefings should be done daily during an operation and when important events dictate. They should:

- Get out a specific message
- Explain complex or technical matters
- Reach a large number of media interested in the same subject matter area.

4-65. PA specialists should think about media deadlines and set the time to help the media meet those deadlines. Be sure to invite all media within the area in a timely manner.

4-66. A knowledgeable and articulate spokesperson should be chosen to present the material. This should be the subject matter expert (SME), but may be the PAO or the commander. At the very minimum, a person of prominence within the command should be selected.

4-67. Other SMEs may be in attendance at the briefing to field technical questions. The SME interviews should be at the request of an individual media representative and the time should be set to facilitate the media to meet those deadlines.

4-68. Consideration should be given to the appearance of the presentation, the message, space, lighting, electrical needs, suitable setting, chairs, tables and press packets. All handouts should be reviewed.

4-69. Appendix H provides briefing and press conference formats.